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Sent by email to Dr Ian Hardcastle

26 February 2019

Dear Dr Hardcastle,

Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2017/18

I am writing further to the receipt of your report for MSc in Medicinal Chemistry.

Your report has been considered by the School and is the basis of this Institutional Response on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor. The School will also use its contents to help inform their [Annual Review and Enhancement](#) process and where appropriate, [Periodic Review](#).

Issues highlighted in your report:

1. **The Assessment Process:** The assessment for taught ten credit modules is by exam alone. Similarly, for modules with in-course assessment opportunities should be given for feedback and advice on draft written work or presentations prior to the assessment process.
2. **The Assessment Process:** The projects are double marked prior to a viva, however, the returned mark sheet does not give details of the individual markers' assessment. Instead an agreed mark is reached after discussion between the markers. An alternative marking scheme has been adopted for MChem projects that does give this detail and should be adopted for this degree programme.
3. **The Assessment Process:** Moderation of external project supervisor laboratory mark should be considered so that they fall into the accepted mark range.

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Response provided by the School:

1. We understand the issue raised by the external examiner, and would like to reassure the examiner that we do provide students with ample opportunities to practice answering examination style questions during the course. There are a number of practice papers (and now also past exam papers) available to the students which they can attempt and then discuss with appropriate staff members. In fact, the formative nature of the practice questions should be to the students' benefit, if they make use of this opportunity. The improved performance in resit examinations may also be due to a more focussed effort by the student, rather than being unfamiliar with examination style questions.

When in-course assessment contains an unfamiliar aspect, such as a presentation or report writing, students are also encouraged to seek guidance if they feel unfamiliar with the task. Given the small student number and the varying abilities, this is done on a personal ad-hoc basis, with the detail of advice varying with the ability of the student. Such meetings are not timetabled but students are encouraged to arrange such meetings if they are unsure of what is required. In addition, for the CHT355 '*Trends in Drug Discovery*' module, the coordinator Prof. Angela Casini has introduced an introductory session in 2018-19 where she explains the learning outcomes and assessment criteria to the students, and provides information on how to write an essay based on literature search.

2. The scheme used in the MChem, where a clear differentiation of marks from both examiners is shown, will be adopted hereafter.
3. The process of project moderation is already carried out by the programme leader. Through discussion with a marker, a clear direction is given for the expected mark range for a given piece of work (considering effort and results). All marks are then scrutinised to ensure a consistency of final results.

The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:

1. your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process;
2. The exam structure is good, with a balance of recall and problem solving questions. The projects were well presented and covered a diverse range of topics within medicinal chemistry.
3. The project component covers a diverse range of topics in exciting areas of medicinal and biological chemistry. This includes the opportunity to work in external collaborators laboratories.

We hope that you will find this response satisfactory and thank you for your continued support of the programme.

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In order to meet the expectations of the [QAA Quality Code](#), both the External Examiner Annual Report and this Institutional Response will be published on the University's [Public Information website](#) and will be available to all students and staff.

We are most grateful for your comments and for your support in this matter.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Simon Wright
Academic Registrar